Culture Centric Leadership

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"I wish to have no connection with any ship that does not sail fast; for I intend to go in harm's way."

John Paul Jones, 1890

Be Intentional About Your Culture

"Culture isn't just one aspect of the game, it is the game. In the end, an organization is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people..."

-- Louis Gerstner, IBM

- ▶ Successful organizations build culture intentionally
- ▶ Elite units do this through their cultural indoctrination process
- ▶ Selection of personnel is the first step of cultural indoctrination
- ▶ Unit symbols, mottos, legends, stories, etc. are all subtle ways that culture is built, shared, and maintained
- ▶ The role of leadership is to establish the culture for the organization
- ▶ The behavior and actions of an organization's leaders have more effect on the culture than anything they say or write
- ▶ To create an effective culture, you <u>MUST</u> be living by the values you are promoting

Have a Higher Purpose For The Organization

"When you're surrounded by people who share a passionate commitment around a common purpose, anything is possible."

— Howard Schultz, Starbucks

- It is essential that people are constantly driving toward an outwardly focused objective

- The purpose of an organization must emotionally resonate and transcend simply making money

- Each organization must have, at its core, a set of guiding principles that everyone understands and agrees to

Always Drive For Continuous Improvement

"It is enough for me if every day I reduce the number of my vices, and blame my mistakes."

Roman Philosopher Seneca

- ▶ The organization must constantly be driving toward continuous improvement at all levels

- ▶ Status quo = Loss of capability. There can be no status quo

- ▶ Toyota called this concept Kaizen which translates to "good change"

- ▶ Each person in the organization should constantly seek to improve the organization

- ▶ Small changes = big changes and turn good to great

Make People The Basis For The Organizational Structure

"The only difference between a mob and a trained army is organization."

— Calvin Coolidge

- People have natural strengths and weaknesses
- In many cases having one skill set excludes another
- Organize everything around the basic skill sets of those you lead
- Focus on the natural strengths and limitations of people
- Avoid establishing org charts that are simply convenient for you

Ensure Individual Accountability

"We must reject the idea that every time a law's broken, society is guilty rather than the lawbreaker. It is time to restore the American precept that each individual is accountable for his actions."

— Ronald Reagan

- Personal accountability is essential for an effective team
- Your team must have individual responsibility to each other and to the purpose of the organization
- Personal accountability demands clear and candid communication throughout the team
- Leadership must take swift and decisive action to maintain individual accountability
- Your standards are what you tolerate not what you articulate

Encourage People To Take Risks

"All courses of action are risky, so prudence is not in avoiding danger (it's impossible), but calculating risk and acting decisively. Make mistakes of ambition and not mistakes of sloth."

— Niccolò Machiavelli

- At their core, organizations are just a grouping of people and things

- Organizational success is dependent upon the collective of individual successes

- Effective leaders inspire those they lead to reach a level they did not believe they could

- Focus on building each member of the team up to the best they can be and the team will reach its potential

- Success comes from risk taking so it is critical that we create an environment that makes our people feel safe when taking calculated risks

Embrace Strong Personalities

"Our culture is friendly and intense, but if push comes to shove we'll settle for intense."

— Jeff Bezos, Amazon

- ▶ Strong personalities are the key to any organization's success

- ▶ Passionate people have strong personalities and strong opinions

- ▶ Strong personalities speak truth to power which helps you avoid making catastrophic mistakes

- ▶ Passionate people learn about the things they love at a very deep level and are often the source of innovation

- ▶ Celebrate the strength of people's convictions and personalities, but help them understand why they can't always be right

Always Have a Plan and Make Everyone Aware of Their Role

"Hope is not a strategy."
— Vince Lombardi

- To achieve any objective as a leader you must have a desired end state

- This end state must then be communicated to the entire team

- A group of people only become a team when they have a common purpose and understand their respective roles

- Transparency in planning and socializing your ideas is absolutely essential

- Clear and regular brief backs of responsibility at assignment ensures a meeting of the minds and awareness of role.

Require A Collaborative Environment

"The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team."

—Phil Jackson

- A collaborative environment is the most efficient and effective means of reaching your desired end state
- Collaborative environments draw on the entire experience and skill of the group, not just a few key members
- The shortest route to a collaborative environment is:
  - Never place people in silos and wall them off from one another
  - Celebrate the passions and differences of the team members and appreciate the value they add to the organization
  - Focus on fixing problems not blame
  - Don't allow bullying
- "Rank off" planning creates a collaborative environment and decreases the likelihood of unexpected contingencies

Always Seek Ground Truth

"Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored."

—Aldous Huxley

- There are many different perspectives in an organization
- People's perspectives are always skewed by their personal interests
- The truth perceived by key staff may not always be the entire team's truth.
- It is critical to get to know those on the team and see their truth
- Specific questions are used to give staff permission to safely tell the unvarnished truth
- Trust is respected

Be Flexible And Open To Criticism

"A hallmark of a healthy, creative culture is that its people feel free to share ideas, opinions, and criticisms. Lack of candor, if unchecked, ultimately leads to dysfunctional environments."

— Ed Catmull, President, Pixar

▶ Self Reflection are the Key to Improvement

▶ The job of the leader is to reach the right path, not to be the one who found it

▶ A team that is candid and honest with itself dramatically increases the likelihood of reaching a correct path

▶ Everyone in the organization has a unique perspective that may save you from yourself

▶ Flexibility and the ability to adapt are the clearest signs of a great team

If It Matters Then Measure It

"People do what's inspected, not what's expected."

— Anonymous

- You never really know something is happening until you measure it

- The things you choose to measure are the things your people regard as important

- Improvement is not really possible without measurement and reassessment

- The metrics you run your organization on also determine the areas of growth for that organization

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